

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6249

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Human Services, Mental Health & Housing, February 1, 2016

Title: An act relating to host home programs.

Brief Description: Concerning host home programs.

Sponsors: Senators O'Ban, Bailey, Darneille, Miloscia, Dammeier, Hasegawa, Carlyle, Litzow, Padden and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services, Mental Health & Housing: 1/14/16, 2/01/16 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6249 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators O'Ban, Chair; Miloscia, Vice Chair; Darneille, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove and Padden.

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7444)

Background: Host home programs link families who need temporary care for their children with families who are willing to provide temporary care for those children. The children are not in the care or custody of the state. Host home programs recruit and screen host families. Host home programs, and host homes, are not regulated by any state agency.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): It is clarified that host home programs and host homes operated by tax-exempt organizations serving youth not in the care of, or receiving services from, the Department of Social and Human Services (DSHS) that meet specific criteria are not considered an "agency" and therefore not subject to regulation by DSHS.

To meet this qualification, a host home program must:

- perform background checks on those over 18 in the host home through the Washington State Patrol or equivalent and inspect the host home as part of their recruiting and screening for potential host homes,
- screen and provide case management to youth in the program;

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- obtain notarized permission or limited power of attorney from the parent or legal guardian of the youth participating in the host home program;
- obtain insurance for the program; and
- provide mandatory reporter and confidentiality training.

By July 1, 2017, the Department of Commerce is to report recommendations and best practices for host home programs to the Governor and Legislature.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Host home programs are to be registered with the Secretary of State (SOS). When the host home program files articles of incorporation or registers with the SOS, the host home program is to provide a notarized statement that the program is meeting its statutory requirements. The SOS has no duty to confirm that a host home program is meeting its statutory requirements, nor does a filing imply an endorsement by the SOS. Host home programs are mandatory reporters. If a minor stays with a host home family longer than six months, the parents are to reauthorize their permission every six months.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: Ryan's House was created on Whidbey Island because there is no youth shelter. Host homes were created. Parents give permission, host homes are inspected. Youth, parent, and host home can withdraw from program at any time. Host home programs rely heavily on community support. The Mason HOST program has 97 percent of students graduating. One youth was not identified as a homeless youth and dropped out of school in eighth grade; the father died when the youth was 16, and the mom was an addict and in and out of jail. Host homes provide an opportunity to be an extended family where a youth might not otherwise have that available, looked into foster but it was too much (the paperwork, the process). Tacoma has a shelter but it's for only 18-24-year-olds. Kids 12-17 aren't being helped, so these programs help get kids sheltered, fed, and provide weekly check-ins. Host homes have identified a gap in service. These kids are not dependents of the state. The families are not paid and there is no government funding, but Division of Licensing Services is saying that host homes do not meet the definition of "suitable placement" because there is no pre-existing relationship between the child and the host family, so we need this clarification in statute. The bill includes language for Commerce's recommend best practices. There is an international exchange student program in the statutes. It's allowed and there is no government involvement.

OTHER: There is a shortage of foster care placements, specifically for adolescent youth. Families come to the Ombuds Office needing help. They are not in a dependency but they do need help and host homes are meeting this needs. Some suggestions: what criminal history is

precluded for a host family? They should have to renew their approval with the host home organization and they should be mandatory reporters.

Persons Testifying on Original Bill: PRO: Lori Cavender, Chris Reilly and Nicole Sorensen, Ryan's House For Youth; Carley Cysensky, Tacoma Shared Housing; Kim Rinehardt, Keandra Radchenko, Jesus Acosta, Josh Dominik, and Mitchell Manthey, Mason HOST; Hana Stowe, Snohomish High School; and Jeff Judy, Executive Director for Olive Crest Safe Families; Olive Crest Safe Families; Dana Coggen, Tacoma Shared Housing Solutions.

OTHER: Patrick Dowd, Director, Office of the Family & Children's Ombuds.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.